

A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DIRECTORS SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND TEACHERS ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT OF KINDERGARTENS IN TAIWAN

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ABSTRACT

Service leadership is one of the most important leadership concepts. In particular, the kindergarten directors need to have the characteristics of service leadership such as listening, respecting and caring. Moreover, in face of the trend of declining birthrate, kindergarten teacher's organizational commitment is related to the kindergarten's development. In view of this, this study is to explore the relationship between director's servant leadership and teacher's organizational commitment in Kaohsiung kindergartens, Taiwan.

The study adopts questionnaire survey. The subjects are kindergarten teachers in Kaohsiung. It is based on purposive sampling. First, 1/3 to 1/4 of all districts in Kaohsiung are selected. Secondly, 1/5 kindergartens are selected from the above selected districts. There are 830 subjects, and a total of 612 usable copies are returned, with a 74% valid response rate. Data is analyzed by means, standard deviation, t-test, one-way ANOVA and Pearson's product –moment correlation.

The main findings of this study are as follows: 1. The current situation of kindergarten teacher's perception of director's servant leadership and teacher's organizational commitment is in high level; 2. Teachers experienced with under 10 years, served as educare givers, in private kindergartens and town kindergartens showed a higher perception for director's servant leadership; 3. Teachers who are above 51 years old, served as administrators, in private kindergartens and town kindergartens showed a higher perception for teacher's organizational commitment; 4. There is positive and significant correlation between director's servant leadership and teacher's organizational commitment.

According to the research findings, the researcher proposes several suggestions for educational administration agencies, kindergartens directors, and further study respectively.

Keywords: Kindergartens, Servant Leadership, Organizational Commitment

INTRODUCTION

Regarding the present research on servant leadership in Taiwan, after the researcher's literature review, the research scopes mostly refer to senior high school, vocational school, junior high school, elementary school, or other fields. Studies on preschools as subjects are scarce. Thus, the researcher aims to treat preschool teachers as subjects to explore their current perception of preschool directors' servant leadership, which is the first motivation of this study.

Organizational commitment is one of the important issues for current school administrations and general organization administrations. The concept of organizational commitment is derived from *Organization Man* written by Whyte (1956). The book mentions that organizational members work for their organizations and they belong to these organizations. In the organizations, they seek ultimate personal belongingness. In the review of related literature in Taiwan, the researcher realizes that Taiwan scholars' studies on organizational commitment are similar to those on servant leadership. The subjects were mostly secondary and elementary school teachers, with few studies examining preschool teachers as subjects. Hence, the researcher aims to treat preschool teachers as subjects and explore their current perception of preschool organizational commitment, which is the second motivation of this study.

The researcher has been a preschool teacher for many years and recognizes that preschool teachers are the critical activity executors in preschools and the major demonstrators of group efficacy. There is also a significant association between preschool directors' servant leadership and teachers' organizational commitment. Therefore, this empirical research aims to probe into the correlation between preschool directors' servant leadership and teachers' organizational commitment, which is the third motivation of this study.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Research Structure

Figure 1 illustrates the research structure.

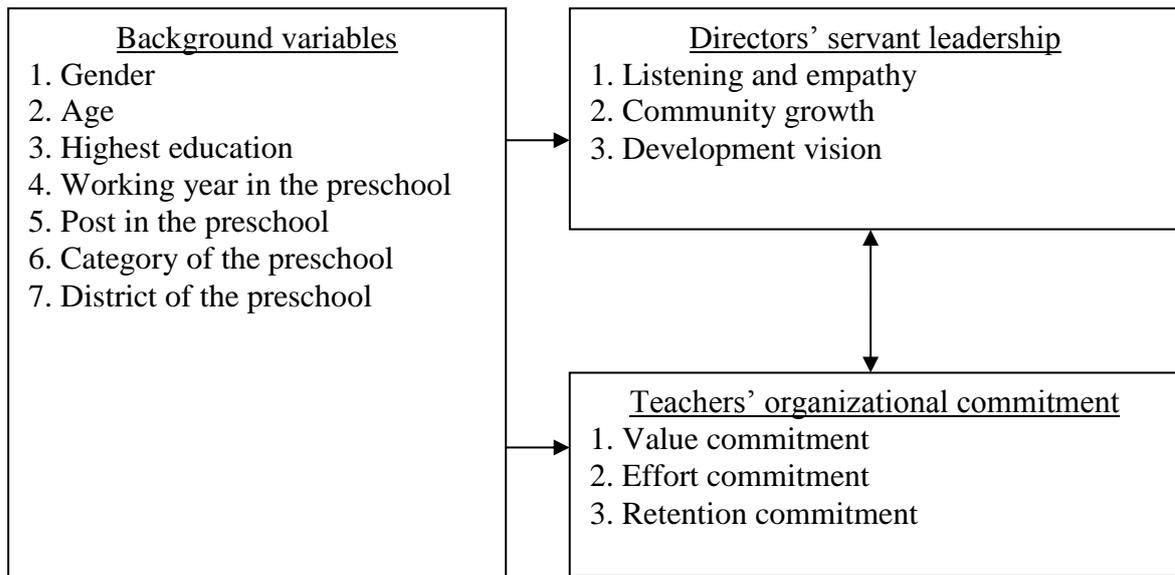


Figure 1. Research structure

Research Subjects

The subjects of this study are preschool teachers in Kaohsiung City, Taiwan. According to statistics of the Education Bureau, Kaohsiung City Government, Taiwan (2017), in the second semester of the academic year of 2016, there were 660 public and private preschools in Kaohsiung City (including preschools of municipal elementary schools) and 5,201 teachers. This is the population of this study.

In the first stage, according to districts, this study classified public and private preschools in Kaohsiung City into large, medium, and small scales and calculated the number of public and

private preschools. Based on the ratio of 1/3, purposive sampling was adopted to obtain 68 public and private preschools at the targets.

In order to increase the representative samples, in the second stage, this study authorized directors of all preschools, by purposive sampling, to extract 12~15 teachers of different backgrounds as samples. However, when directors suggested an increase or reduction of questionnaires, this study sent questionnaires according to the numbers suggested.

Formal questionnaires were sent to 68 preschools on September 28, 2017. There was a total of 830 questionnaires. After retrieving the questionnaires, this study obtained 612 valid samples for a return rate of 74%.

Research Tools

The questionnaire on directors' servant leadership is based on the questionnaire content designed by Chen (2013), including "listening and empathy", "community growth", and "development vision" and 21 items.

The questionnaire on teachers' organizational commitment is based on the questionnaire content designed by Pan (2014), including "value commitment", "effort commitment", and "retention commitment" and 15 items.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis of this study includes Descriptive Statistics, *t*-test, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson's Product-moment Correlation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis and Discussion of the Current Situation of Directors' Servant Leadership

Table 1 lists the current situation of directors' servant leadership.

Table 1. Current situation of directors' servant leadership (N=612)

Name of dimension	Number of items	Average mean	Standard deviation	F value
A. Listening and empathy	7	4.11	.77	19.43
B. Community growth	7	4.12	.74	
C. Development vision	7	4.10	.77	
Overall dimension	21	4.11	.73	

According to Table 1, this study shows that preschool teachers' overall mean perception of directors' servant leadership is 4.11, which is "high". The levels of their perception on different dimensions of directors' servant leadership are the following: mean of "community growth" is 4.12 (highest); mean of "listening and empathy" is 4.11; and mean of "development vision" is 4.10 (lowest). Nevertheless, the difference among various dimensions is not significant ($F=19.43, p>.05$).

The research result matches the studies of Liu (2012) and Wu (2015). It is also similar to the finding of Huang (2012) who showed medium and high degrees. As to dimensions of servant leadership, according to this study, the score of "community growth" is the highest, which matches the research of Chen (2013) and Wu (2015). Thus, current preschool directors can pay attention to interaction and cooperation among preschool teachers, reveal full empowerment, continuously create learning opportunities, and encourage teachers to study and absorb new knowledge. Furthermore, this study reveals that the score of "development

vision” is the highest and matches research of Chen (2013). The researcher argues that the reason could be that directors cannot practice any reform of the current situation and do not develop feasible action strategies to respond to the future vision and sustainable operation of affairs in preschools.

Analysis and Discussion of Current Situation of Teachers’ Organizational Commitment

Table 2 presents the current situation of teachers’ organizational commitment.

Table 2. Current situation of teachers’ organizational commitment (N=612)

Name of dimension	Number of items	Average mean	Standard deviation	F value	Post-hoc comparison
A. Value commitment	7	4.06	.69	25.25***	
B. Effort commitment	7	4.16	.66		B>A
C. Retention commitment	7	4.25	.68		C>A C>B
Overall dimension	21	4.15	.65		

***P<.001

According to Table 2, this study shows that preschool teachers in Kaohsiung City have an overall mean of 4.15 on teachers’ organizational commitment, which is “high”. The levels of perception on different dimensions of teachers’ organizational commitment are as follows: mean of “retention commitment” is 4.25 (highest); mean of “effort commitment” is 4.16; and mean of “value commitment” is 4.06 (lowest). The difference among the dimensions is quite significant (F=25.25, p<.001).

Regarding the current situation of teachers’ organizational commitment, the research finding matches the studies of Liao (2008), Chen (2014), Pan (2014), Hsieh (2014), Lin (2015), and Lin (2017). As to the dimensions of teachers’ organizational commitment, this study reveals that the score of “value commitment” is the lowest and matches the study of Lee et al. (2005). Hence, preschool teachers do not show strong feeling and perception on school image and prospect. In addition, this study reveals that the score of “retention commitment” is the highest and matches the study of Pan (2014). Thus, current preschools in Kaohsiung City are friendly to teachers and are associated with benefits for preschool teachers at work.

Correlation Analysis and Discussion of Directors’ Servant Leadership and Teachers’ Organizational Commitment

Table 3 presents the correlation coefficients of preschool teachers on different dimensions of “directors’ servant leadership” and “teachers’ organizational commitment”.

Table 3. Product-moment correlation analysis of directors’ servant leadership and teachers’ organizational commitment (N=612) [^{**}p<.01]

Teachers’ organizational commitment	Value commitment	Effort commitment	Retention commitment	Overall dimension
Directors’ servant leadership				
Listening and empathy	.75**	.72**	.73**	.77**
Community growth	.78**	.76**	.76**	.80**
Development vision	.76**	.72**	.71**	.76**
Overall dimension	.79**	.76**	.76**	.81**

According to Table 3, Kaohsiung City preschool teachers' perception of directors' overall servant leadership and teachers' overall organizational commitment exhibit a significant correlation ($r=.81$, $p<.01$). Thus, the measure and concept of directors' servant leadership directly influence teachers' organizational commitment.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

1. Preschool teachers' perception of directors' servant leadership is high, the perception of "community growth" is higher, and that of "development vision" is lower.
2. Preschool teachers' perception of teachers' organizational commitment is high, the perception of "retention commitment" is higher, and that of "value commitment" is lower.
3. When preschool teachers' perception of directors' servant leadership is higher, their perception of teachers' organizational commitment will also be higher.

Suggestions

Preschool directors should pay attention to servant leadership and particularly form a common consensus of preschool colleagues' vision development.

According to the findings of this study, preschool teachers' perception of directors' servant leadership ("development vision") is the lowest. Therefore, preschool directors should particularly value the vision development of preschools, allow preschool teachers to fully recognize the medium- and long-term development plans of overall preschool affairs, and more attentively listen to preschool teachers' opinions.

A positive organizational culture and reinforcement of preschool educational quality should be constructed to strengthen preschool teachers' value commitment.

According to the findings of this study, preschool teachers' perception of teachers' organizational commitment ("value commitment") is the lowest. Hence, this study suggests that preschool directors should value a positive organizational culture of preschools and enhance the educational quality of preschools, which can lead to parents' significant acknowledgement of such efforts. Furthermore, directors can look to recruit more preschool teachers with high aspirations and strong interest for selection and service.

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